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PROGRAM Morning Edition

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SUBJECT Interview With Miles Copeland

BOB EDWARDS: Along with every new generation comes new points of view, new cultural heroes and heroines, and certainly new music.

This morning, Tom Vitali tells the story of the bridges and gaps between two generations in one rather unusual American family.

[Up music].

TOM VITALI: The youngest member of the Copeland family is the most visible. Thirty-year-old Stewart is the drummer and founder of the "Police," a rock band that sold three million albums last year and released this hit single.

[Up music].

Stewart's father is also a public figure. Miles Copeland, II, has written two books on his experiences in the CIA, A Game of Nations and The Real Spy World.

Miles began his career as a jazz trumpet player in the 1930's. When World War II broke out, the young musician joined the Army to play with the Glenn Miller Band. But soon he attracted the interest of Army Intelligence.

MILES COPELAND: And they gave us the Army General Classification Test, which is sort of an I.Q. test. Well, you couldn't tell it to look at me, but in those days I could go right through the ceiling. I made 170-180, and I've never been

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to school. I was as ignorant as possible to be, and to make a grade like that and be only a trumpet player absolutely dazzled everyone, so they thought I'd cheated.

So, they made me take it again, and I made an even higher grade. So, Wild Bill Donnovan -- this came to his attention -- and he thought that -- he was attracted, first, by the high score and, second, the possibility that I'd cheated, because I was able to be qualified for the intelligence business.

VITALI: Miles Copeland was made an officer in the Army Intelligence, the OSS, which later became the Central Intelligenc Agency.

After the War, he was stationed in the Middle East where his exploits included organizing massive intelligence forces in Egypt and overthrowing the government in Syria.

Miles Copeland officially retired from the CIA in 1957, but the 70-year-old native of Alabama still keeps a watchful eye on the agency.

COPELAND: My complaint about the Agency is it hasn't assassinated nearly enough people or overthrow nearly enough governments. My objection is that they've fallen down on their job, and that's the kind of criticism some of them like.

[Up music].

VITALI: While Miles Copeland has played a role in shaping world politics, his son is having international impact on the cultural side, primarily in bringing British "New Wave" music to America.

[Up music and singing].

Miles Copeland's son, Ian, is the president of FBI, Frontier Booking International, with 65 bands, the largest "New Wave" booking agency in the United States. When Ian Copeland formed FBI in 1978, the American music establishment was skeptical of this "New Wave" music. Ian created a circuit of clubs that would feature innovative new bands without record contracts. Soon, unknown acts like "The Police" and "Squeeze" became stars, and "New Wave" had taken hold.

[Up music and singing].

Ian Copeland says he may have inherited some of his successful methods from his father.

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IAN COPELAND: Yes, I see a lot of parallels. It's really very often a matter of going behind the scenes and not straight to the established course. The CIA would, instead of trying diplomacy in front of the rest of the world, they would go behind he the scenes and cause things to happen the way we wanted them to happen, you know, by finding an alternative course, and we found an alternative course to make new music happen in much the same way, I'm sure, as he did, when he was trying to put Nasser into power in Egypt or someone in Syria.

VITALI: In addition to Stewart and Ian, a third Copeland sibling is involved in the music business. Miles, Jr. is the head of International Record Syndicate, IRS, a successful "New Wave" record label and management company.

The Copeland brothers named their enterprises FBI, IRS and the Police as a play on their father's CIA connections, but Ian says the joke does have a practical side.

IAN COPELAND: When I phone someone up, they may never have heard of me before, and I'm initially told that he's in a meeting. As soon as I say "This is Ian Copeland from the FBI," you can be sure that all of a sudden he comes out of his meeting and wants to know who's calling.

VITALI: "New Wave" music grew out of the rebellious pub movement in the 1970's. In the youth culture -- that is, the "New Wave" audience, the CIA is a dirty word, but Ian Copeland doesn't share that view, and his father, Miles, says those who do are simply naive.

MILES COPELAND: It's youthful ignorance, frankly, and that's -- you can't take it for granted. In fact, we live in a world where the most lovable, nicest people and the greatest majority of people are really ignorant of what's happening.

VITALI: In New York, I'm Tom Vitali, for NPR, National Public Radio.

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